

O 121601Z SEP 01
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3813
INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS CAIRO 005603

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL PTER EG IS
SUBJECT: TFUSO1: EGYPT RESPONDS TO U.S. DISASTER

OFFICIAL CONTACTS

¶11. THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT REACTED QUICKLY TO THE HORRIFIC EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES ON SEPTEMBER 11. A CLEARLY DISTRAUGHT PRESIDENT MUBARAK APPEARED ON TELEVISION, EXPRESSING SORROW AND SADNESS AT THE EVENTS. HE LATER CALLED A CABINET MEETING, DIRECTING THAT ALL FORMS OF ASSISTANCE BE OFFERED TO THE EMBASSY. DEFENSE MINISTER TANTAWI, AS WELL AS FOREIGN MINISTER MAHER, WERE IN CONTACT WITH THE AMBASSADOR DURING THE EVENING TO INSURE THAT U.S. NEEDS WERE MET. ARAB LEAGUE SECRETARY-GENERAL AMR MOUSSA PHONED THE AMBASSADOR TO EXPRESS CONDOLENCES, AND IN HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS EXPRESSED THE SAME SENTIMENTS. AFTERNOON OF SEPTEMBER 12, SHEIKH TANTAWI OF AL-AZHAR TOLD "WAFD" REPORTER THAT HE WAS PAINED BY THIS ACT AND OFFERED CONDOLENCES TO THE VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES. AT THE SAME TIME, HE CONDEMNED ACTS COMMITTED BY ISRAEL AND ASKED THAT THE U.S. NOT JUMP TO QUICK CONCLUSIONS AS TO THE PERPETRATORS.

THE MEDIA

¶12. MOST PAPERS FRONT-PAGED MUBARAK'S STATEMENTS OF SYMPATHY, CONDOLENCES, AND DENUNCIAION OF TERRORIST ATTACKS "UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES." PAPERS ALSO QUOTED PRESIDENT BUSH ON HOW THOSE RESPONSIBLE WOULD BE IDENTIFIED AND PUNISHED. MOST PAPERS REPORTED THE CLOSURE OF THE EMBASSY.

¶13. POPULAR TV MORNING CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAM "SUBAH AL-KHAYR" INTERVIEWED AN EGYPTIAN GENERAL WHO SAID THE ATTACKS REVEAL THE WEAKNESS OF AMERICAN SECURITY AND THE ABSENCE OF A CAPABLE INTELLIGENCE SERVICE. ANOTHER EGYPTIAN MILITARY EXPERT WAS SHOWN ON T.V. SAYING, THAT GLOBALIZATION, THE GULF WAR, AND THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT WERE PROBABLE MOTIVES FOR THE ATTACK, ADDING THAT THE OPERATION WAS BEYOND THE CAPABILITIES OF ANY NON-STATE ENTITY. EDITORIAL COMMENT PREDICTABLY RUNS THE GAMUT FROM SOLE CONDOLENCE AND CONDEMNATION TO A MIXED MESSAGE COMBINING THE ABOVE BUT LINKING THE ATTACKS TO ALLEGED U.S. SUPPORT FOR ISRAELI "TERRORISM."

OTHERS

¶14. THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD (MB) ISSUED A STATEMENT OF SHOCK, EXPRESSING REGRET AT THIS ATTACK AGAINST ALL HUMAN VALUES. THE MB ALSO DENOUNCED "ALL AGGRESSION AGAINST HUMAN VALUES THROUGHOUT THE GLOBE."

ON THE SECURITY SIDE

¶15. CONTACTS REPORT THAT SEVERAL INDIVIDUALS (NFI) WERE ARRESTED IN HOMES AND COFFEEHOUSES BY POLICE AND HAULED OFF IN SECURITY VANS IN THE PYRAMIDS-KERDASSA AREA LAST NIGHT. AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF CAIRO WILL STAY CLOSED THROUGH SEPTEMBER 12. AIRPORT SECURITY IS REPORTEDLY EXTREMELY TIGHT.

FROM THE STREET

¶6. AS EXPECTED, PUBLIC OPINION RAN THE GAMUT FROM COMPLETE SYMPATHY TO DOWNRIGHT SATISFACTION. WE AND OUR FSN STAFF CANVASSED REACTION OF INDIVIDUALS FROM DIFFERENT SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL GROUPS. THOSE FROM POLITICAL PARTIES, NGOS, HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS STRONGLY CONDEMNED THE KILLING OF CIVILIANS, WITH MANY ADDING THAT THE ATTACKS, UNFORTUNATELY REFLECTED THE PROBLEMS WITH U.S. POLICY IN THE REGION. A MINORITY EXPRESSED SYMPATHY FOR THE VICTIMS BUT HAD NO VIEW ONE WAY OR ANOTHER ON THE POLITICS OF THE ATTACKS. FINALLY, NEWS VENDORS, SERVANTS, CAB DRIVERS, AND COFFEEHOUSE PATRONS GENERALLY EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH THE ATTACKS, SAYING THAT PALESTINIANS HAD EXPERIENCED THIS FOR MANY YEARS, NOW, FINALLY, IT WAS AMERICA'S TURN. INTERESTINGLY, A LEFT-LEANING CONTACT AND OWNER OF A COFFEESHOP TOLD US THAT AFTER THE FIRST REPORTS OF A TERRORIST ATTACK OCCURRED IN THE U.S., THERE WAS A GENERAL SENSE AMONG THE SEVERAL PATRONS THAT THE U.S. WOULD KNOW NOW "HOW IT FELT." HOWEVER, AFTER THE MAGNITUDE OF THE DESTRUCTION BEGAN TO BE TELEVISED, OUR CONTACT REPORTED THAT SILENCE FELL OVER THE SHOP AND FURTHER TALK OF APPROVAL COMPLETELY CEASED.

WELCH